

# THEME 5 THE VALLETTA BRAND

**EVALUATION & MONITORING**  
**Research Findings 2017**

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# INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring process is a means through which the Valletta 2018 Foundation gains a deeper insight into the various impacts of the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) title on different spheres of cultural, social and economic life.

The goal of this process is twofold:

- (i) To understand the changes brought about by the ECoC title, and
- (ii) To address any shortcomings and challenges faced by the Valletta 2018 Cultural Programme throughout its implementation.

This process comprises a series of longitudinal studies commencing in January 2015, three full years before the European Capital of Culture year, and running through the ECoC, with results presented in 2019, thereby capturing data before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of Valletta holding the ECoC title.

This process is divided into five themes:

- 1. Cultural & Territorial Vibrancy**
- 2. Governance & Finance**
- 3. Community Inclusion & Space**
- 4. The Tourist Experience**
- 5. The Valletta Brand**

This research is a collaborative, mixed-methods process, involving a number of public entities, collecting and analysing data primarily of a quantitative nature, together with independent researchers working with data that is predominantly qualitative. These entities and researchers constitute the Valletta 2018 Evaluation & Monitoring Steering Committee, that was set up to manage and implement this research process.

The public entities forming part of the Steering Committee are:

- National Statistics Office
- Malta Tourism Authority
- Jobsplus
- Economic Policy Department within the Ministry for Finance

The independent researchers participating within this process were selected according to their area of expertise. The areas covered are:

- Cultural Programme
- Branding
- Sociology
- Built Environment
- European Identity

Although each of these researchers, and their respective teams, are carrying out data collection and analysis specifically within their respective fields, various points of intersection and collaboration across the various areas have been established so far. The data being collected throughout each study is being shared with the Steering Committee in order to create synergies between the different fields being analysed.

The research methods adopted throughout the various studies that comprise this process vary greatly, ranging from quantitative surveys to in-depth interviews, focus groups and real-time experience tracking.



# THE VALLETTA BRAND

## THEME 5

Branding and communication forms a crucial aspect of any European Capital of Culture, to the extent that in many cases the brand of the respective ECoC becomes synonymous with the sweeping social, cultural and infrastructural changes which the city has undergone. As in any organisational setting, having a clear brand identity allows an organisation to strategise and communicate its goals and engage with diverse communities in a more efficient and cohesive manner not only during the ECoC year itself, but also in the aftermath of the title.

This theme focuses on this issue, analysing the extent to which the Valletta 2018 Foundation has succeeded in communicating its brand, and the degree of engagement with the Valletta 2018 communications strategy. The research study within this theme, conducted by Dr Emanuel Said, tracks user engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand through a process of real-time experience tracking, whereby participants are monitored periodically for their engagement with Valletta 2018 and its various activities throughout the year.



# **AUDIENCES' EXPERIENCES OF THE VALLETTA 2018 BRAND**

**Dr Emanuel Said**



# INTRODUCTION

The project studies how audiences engage with the different forms of communication that the Valletta 2018 communications programme is transmitting. Longitudinal in nature, this project relies on an innovative data gathering approach involving real-time experience tracking and aims to determine the effects each type of communications transmitted by Valletta 2018 purport on the different audiences as reflected in individuals' attitudes and behaviour.

This study builds on the quantitative initiatives the Evaluation and Monitoring committee is undertaking in the form of the periodic Valletta Participation Survey (VPS), and investigates how audiences engage with the Valletta 2018 brand by:

- exploring the touchpoints<sup>1</sup> that feature in individuals' engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand;
- determining the sequences of encounters that individuals experience in their engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand; and
- assessing the effects that such encounters produce on individuals experiencing the Valletta 2018 brand.

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<sup>1</sup> A touchpoint is an episode where an individual (part of an audience) has a direct or indirect contact with a (cultural) brand (after Baxendale et al., 2015).



# METHODOLOGY

This study looks at the process of engagement rather than at the influences or outcomes of audience engagement with cultural events within the Valletta 2018 programme. It is this process that lies at the basis of audience (behavioural) segmentation that can help producers or creators better plan initiatives that target specific audience segments more effectively in future initiatives – both locally and overseas. As an ultimate objective, this study is intended to evaluate the outcomes of the Valletta 2018 communications strategy.

This study focuses on the individuals' experiences of the cultural brand as the unit of analysis, with analysis levelled to the audience individuals and their experiences, differing from earlier cultural participation research projects that focus on either the producers/creators' views or the participants' post-hoc perceptions about experienced events.

Individuals experience and engage with the Valletta 2018 brand in two key ways: by experiencing communications transmitted directly by the Valletta 2018 Foundation or by engaging/experiencing indirect communications like word of mouth and social media exchanges. Audiences (and stakeholders) experience a holistic engagement with a cultural brand across multiple points of contact (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2009), touchpoints (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007) or discrete encounters (Meyer & Schwager, 2007) as audiences (and stakeholders) progress in their journey with the brand (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008).

This study recognizes brands (particularly cultural ones) as dynamic, continuous social processes (Muñiz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Individuals (audiences), production actors (performers, producers, creators) as well as other stakeholders constitute a network of resources (rather than dyadic relationships<sup>2</sup>) who co-create brand value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). Brand value emerges from stakeholders' experiences<sup>3</sup> with the brand and as a result of sustained negotiations and symbolic interpretations of brand-related information. Brand value also emerges from personal narratives based on personal or impersonal experiences with brands (Muñiz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand value is located in the minds of audiences and stakeholders (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007) who form brand communities – or specialised non-geographically bound communities, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand (Muñiz Jr. & O'Guinn, 2001).

Audiences' engagement with cultural brands exhibits community-like qualities as understood in sociology, and address identity – meaning – and status-related concerns for all network participants above. There are 12 value-creating practices in brand communities, organized in four thematic categories (after Schau et al., 2009). Of these, *community engagement*, *impression management* and *social networking* are most relevant to cultural brands.

Brand resonance involves relationships that are described in four dimensions (Keller, 2001). On top of loyalty and attachment, *community* and *engagement* dimensions are most relevant to cultural brands as is Valletta 2018. The *community dimension* relates to that broader meaning to audiences who identify themselves with a brand community and sense affiliation (if not kinship) with other individuals associated

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<sup>2</sup> After Ballantyne and Aitken (2007); Ind and Bjerke (2007); Jones (2005); McAlexander et al. (2002) and Muñiz Jr. and Schau (2005)

<sup>3</sup> Or the subjective response to the holistic direct and indirect encounter with the brand after Lemke et al. (2011).

with the brand (such as fellow audience members experiencing the brand, performers, producers and creators among others). *Active engagement*, by contrast, is where audiences assert loyalty to a brand. Within this dimension, audiences invest time, energy, money and other resources into the cultural brand beyond those explained during the purchase or consumption of cultural events (after Keller, 2001).

This rationale suggests five important considerations that the methodology employed entertains. First, rather than considering the Valletta 2018 as a static property, this study looks at the process through which audiences engage with the Valletta 2018 brand. Second, this process involves a network of actors (audiences, performers, producers and creators) using operant and operand resources<sup>4</sup>. Third, audiences engaged in this process experience multiple touch points. Fourth, a variety of individuals are involved in audience and performer/provider spheres. Fifth, individuals experience cultural brands in a collective consumption context, highlighting the multitude of touchpoints that audiences encounter in their participation in cultural events and associated co-creation of value (after Kelleher et al., 2015).

In response to these five considerations, the study's methodology acknowledges that audiences engage with Valletta 2018 brand through a multitude of encounters that range from direct instances (like advertising or actual participation in an event) to other indirect experiences (like word of mouth or third-party contributions on social media). These encounters impact on individuals' attitudes towards Valletta 2018 brand.

Traditional survey methods can capture and measure such impacts but rely on individuals' memories of encounters with the Valletta 2018 brand after that such events occur. Memories fade rapidly and are often biased by whether or not a participation actually happened (Bryman, 2012; Malhotra & Birks, 2007; McGivern, 2013). A richer account about the total effect of the different encounters an individual makes with a brand can be constructed through ethnographic approaches that require observers participating in the experiences with observed individuals. Ethnographic methods are limited as individual observers can only shadow a limited number of individuals for a restricted period of time (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; van Maanen, 2011). Moreover, individuals' behaviours tend to change as a result of individuals' own social desirability – or the unconscious desire to “please” the observer (Adler & Adler, 1987; Bryman, 2012; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Patton, 1980; Paulhus, 1991).

An alternative approach involves engaging research participants to interact with the researcher using the participants' own mobile phone. Data is collected in real time (hence the term “real-time experience tracking” or RET) (Baxendale, Macdonald, & Wilson, 2015; Macdonald, Wilson, & Konus, 2012) and mitigates the challenges of traditional ethnography in two ways. First, whereas a researcher/observer cannot easily track audiences 24 hours daily, participants' mobile phones can. Second, unlike human observers, participants' mobile phones do not influence participants' perceptions on encounters and experiences.

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<sup>4</sup> Audiences use knowledge and skills (operant resources) to engage with cultural brands and transform physical or experience (operand resources) into meaning, experiential benefits and value.



A process view to audiences' brand engagement is drawn from four essential steps, where research participants:

1. Fill out an online questionnaire about their personality as well as their sensory, behavioural and intellectual dimensions of Valletta 2018 brand experience;
2. Answer a short questionnaire whenever they encounter Valletta 2018 by way of noting Valletta 2018 communications or participating in events or experiencing (other direct or indirect ways) the brand;
3. Fill in an online diary in which they corroborate/reflect on their encounters with Valletta 2018;
4. Complete an online questionnaire (modified version of (1) above) to assess any change in attitudes and views about their Valletta 2018 experience.

Established RET methods rely on two types of data collection channels: text (SMS) messaging and online (involving pre-RET and post-RET surveys as well as an online diary) (Macdonald *et al.*, 2012). In these studies, participant contributions through online diary are not obligatory and result in poorly capturing participants' reflections about their experience with brands. The method employed for researching the Valletta 2018 brand moves from utilising traditional mobile phones to using participants' smart phones that are in widespread use among Maltese (and foreign) consumers<sup>5</sup>. The use of smart phones enables observers to use a purposively developed app that captures the relevant data in steps (2) and (3) above in one stage.

Up to this date and in line with the project's planned efforts, this study involved the design, production and piloting of the new RET app. Just Some Coding Ltd were contracted late in October 2015 and the app was piloted in February 2016. Following observations emerging from the use of the app during the piloting, a new, improved app was launched for a larger scale field effort in May 2016, involving an eight-week data collection period ending on 15 July 2016, that coincided with the tailing of Valletta 2018 cultural activities in Summer 2016. In 2017, a large-scale administration of the RET app was planned for the same May-July period. However, in response to the General Elections being held in June 2017, the field work was postponed for July 2017. Because the summer wave of field work attracted a relatively small number of participants, a second wave was attempted during an eight-week period between October and November 2017.

From a methodological perspective, there are four key limitations impacting on the study's validity and reliability. First, participants may have reported experiences well after the encounter happening, if at all – and is a common aspect manifest in indirect methods of data collection (such as self-completion surveys). The capture of GIS data remains a valid opportunity and can be captured only if research participants consent, albeit associated with ethical reservations.

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<sup>5</sup> In 2014, 42% of mobile phone users made use of a smartphone – up from 37% in 2013. A prevailing majority of smartphone users are younger than 34 years, with proportions of smartphone users (over total mobile phone users) declining with ages older than 35. These proportions are expected to increase drastically during 2015 and 2016. Source: Malta Communications Authority, 2014.

Second, as with survey methods, researchers' questions (as an intervention) may influence participants' attitudes towards a brand. Third, there is a possibility that specific types of encounters remain only sparsely represented, as reported in earlier studies even when large numbers of participants are engaged in RET studies. This study tried to mitigate this challenge by administering more than one wave of participation (for each participant) following the suggestions of Baxendale *et al.*, (2015) and Macdonald *et al.* (2012). Asking participants to keep engaged with RET for longer periods than one week was ineffective and is consistent with earlier experience (as well as published studies) where high participant dropout rates in longitudinal investigations are reported (McGivern, 2013).

Fourth, RET participants may fail to report all encounters with the Valletta 2018 brand for various reasons. This study aimed to alleviate the effect of these challenges by administering incentives that help individuals remain committed to their participation in the study. Incentives involved free (or sponsored) access to various events within the Valletta 2018 programme of events, but could not effectively alleviate challenges emerging from diminishing participant engagement with RET.

# FINDINGS

The first-time use of the RET app in a cultural brand context offered encouraging results. In 2016, RET was administered between 15 May and 15 July (both dates included) and attracted 130 participants, of whom 62 reported a total of 367 encounters. In 2017, RET was administered between 15 July and 30 August (both dates included). This wave attracted 18 participants who reported a total of 64 encounters. In response to these deprived participation rates, a second wave was administered between 1 October and 30 November 2017 (both dates included). Again, this wave attracted another 18 participants who reported a total of 57 encounters. The poor response is attributed to three contextual aspects:

- a) The summer field attempts were timed just after a significant electoral campaign and a substantial number of opinion polls that battered the electorate (and potential study participants) for over five weeks. Additional research efforts albeit not associated with political events or parties were met with relative indifference if not opposition, often seen as an additional intrusion on private lives;
- b) The timing of the summer field attempts also coincided with a tailing-off of Valletta 2018 efforts (communications and events), thereby finding fewer prospective participants who were in some way engaged with the Valletta 2018 brand.
- c) To mitigate the issues foreseen in (c) above, field attempts involved face-to-face attempts to attract study participants (following the engagement of a professional field-research firm – B2B Malta Ltd). Field workers again faced a relative lack of interest among prospective participants despite the offering of participation incentives involving cash and non-cash rewards.

Despite the aggregation of responses for both 2016 and 2017 waves (with a total of 488 encounters from 91 different participants), the planned latent class analysis could not be employed effectively. The following paragraphs set out a summary of the findings emerging from the three field wave efforts to date.

## Sample description

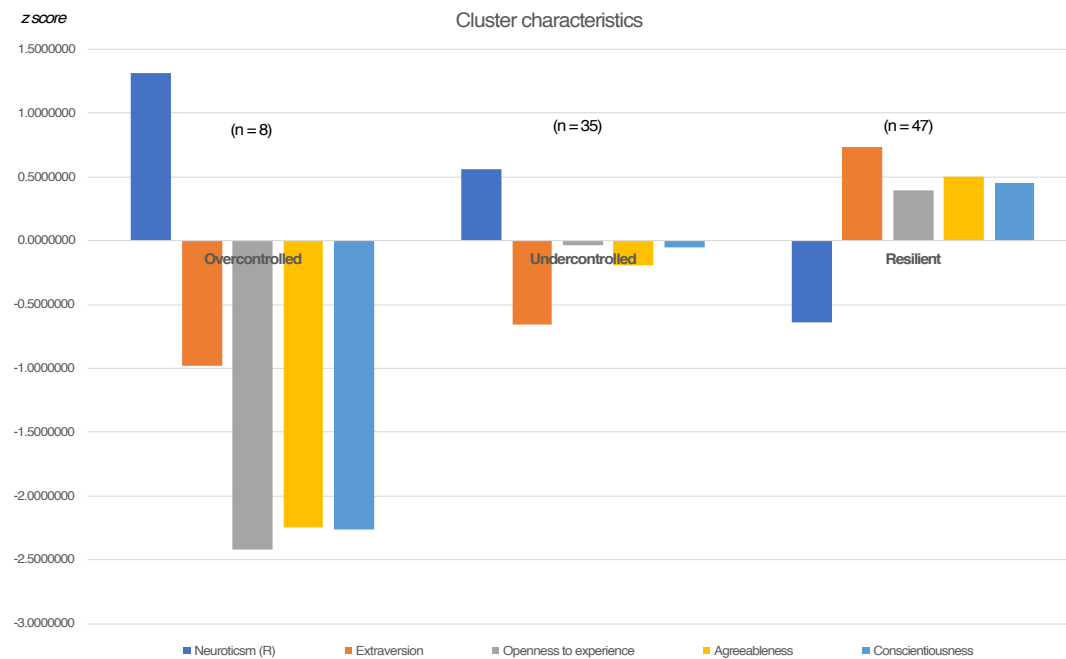
Of the 91 participants, 7 participated in multiple field-waves administered in 2016 and 2017. A total of 56 participants were female, 36 had achieved a university degree while another 27 had a postgraduate qualification. 37 participants lived in the Northern Harbour region while another 14 lived in the Southern Harbour region. 41 participants were married, while another 39 were single. The participants' average age stood at 40 years (median age of 41), featuring a relatively normal distribution of ages that ranged from 15 years old up to 70 years old. Each participant reported an average of 5 encounters (median = 3, standard deviation = 6.6), with the number of encounters ranging from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 36.

A total of 90 participants could be categorized in three personality types: overcontrolled ( $n = 8$ ), undercontrolled ( $n=35$ ) and resilient ( $n=47$ ) (after Asendorpf, Borkenau, Ostendorf, & Van Aken, 2001; Rammstedt, Riemann, Angleitner, & Borkenau, 2004). The remaining participant could not be categorized because she submitted a response that lay well outside the  $z = \pm 3$  range.

A resilient personality is one where the individual manifests least neuroticism among all other personality types, but has an above average manifestation of all other four personality dimensions. By contrast, the overcontrolled personality is one where the individual manifests highest levels of neuroticism (compared to peer participants) by least levels of manifestation of the other four personality dimensions. The undercontrolled personality also manifests above average neuroticism but manifests around average levels of openness to experience and agreeableness (see Figure 1).

An analysis of the clusters revealed no significant differences in gender, region, education level or marital status distribution across the three different clusters. Nor can any differences in mean age or age distribution be observed across all three clusters.

**Figure 1:** Cluster membership (Source: Author)



## Brand experience

As for brand experience (after Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009), this study finds that participants express no discernible improvement in their impressions on their Valletta 2018 experience (from the start to the end of the RET data collection). Indeed, all paired t-test comparisons suggest no significant difference in sensory, behavioural and intellectual dimensions in responses at start and at end of the field work, both overall and at cluster level (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Net change in participants' impression on their Valletta 2018 experience during the time of study (Source: Author)

Effect (average agreement score change from start to end of RET) at 95% confidence interval				
Cluster	Resilients	Undercontrolled	Overcontrolled	Overall
Valletta 2018 makes a strong impression on my senses	No change	No change	No change	No change
I find Valletta 2018 interesting in a sensory way	No change	No change	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 does not appeal to my senses	No change	No change	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 induces feelings and sentiments	No change	No change	No change	No change
I do not have strong emotions for Valletta 2018	No change	No change	No change	No change
I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter Valletta 2018	No change	No change	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 does not make me think	No change	No change	No change	No change
Valletta 2018 stimulates my curiosity	No change	No change	No change	No change

## Encounters and events

For the 2017 waves, most encounters reported related to Valletta Film Festival and Malta Jazz Festival (in Summer) and Notte Bianca as well as Science in the City (in Autumn) (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Events encountered by participants in 2017 waves (Source: Author)

	Frequency	Valid Percent
<b>Summer Wave</b>		
Valletta Film Festival	18	28.1
Malta Jazz Festival	13	20.3
Malta International Arts Festival	8	12.5
Malta Mediterranean Literature	7	10.9
L-Ghanja tal-Poplu	7	10.9
Other	6	9.4
Ghanafest	5	7.8
Total	64	100.0
<b>Autumn Wave</b>		
Notte Bianca	19	33.3
Science in the City	16	28.1
Forza Malta... Short Films	7	12.3
Other	6	10.5
Steam @ Spazju Kreattiv	3	5.3
Patience	3	5.3
RIMA Digital Storytelling Workshop	2	3.5
Design4DCity	1	1.8
Total	57	100.0

As in 2016, most encounters reported in the 2017 waves involved mere internet browsing. Television viewing was the second most reported type of encounter in both 2016 and 2017 summer waves, but in 2017 autumn Wave, participants reported more direct participation than in previous data collection waves (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Participants' experiencing of events (Source: Author)

	2016 Wave		2017 Summer Wave		2017 Autumn Wave	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Internet browsing	109	29.7	17	26.6	18	31.6
Saw on TV	43	11.7	15	23.4	5	8.8
Heard on radio	27	7.4	6	9.4	8	14.0
Read on newspapers/magazine	14	3.8	10	15.6	7	12.3
Posted on social media myself	34	9.3	3	4.7	2	3.5
Chat with friends/family face-to-face	43	11.7	4	6.3	4	7.0
Overheard a conversation	12	3.3	4	6.3	2	3.5
Participated in the event	36	9.8	2	3.1	9	15.8
Used Valletta 2018 app	NA	NA	1	1.6	0	0.0
Other	49	13.4	2	3.1	2	3.5
Total	367	100.0	64	100.0	57	100.0

satisfying the encounter was for them. A further question was introduced in the 2017 field waves asking participants to express how they felt about their encounter (whether better or worse). Ratings were measured on a five-point scale.

Summer wave data suggests that the events that offered most value comprised the Malta Jazz Festival and the Malta Mediterranean Literature events (see Table 4). These events also proved to be the more satisfying and those events that left participants better off. Autumn data suggests that the events that offered more value comprised Notte Bianca and Forza Malta... Short Films. Notte Bianca and RIMA Digital Story Telling Workshop were the two events that proved most satisfying and left participants better off than all other events captured in this wave. Despite the noticeable differences in means in standard deviations, these observations remain unsupported by tests for significance (ANOVA).

**Table 4:** Perceived value and satisfaction with encounters across different events (*Source: Author*)

2017 Summer Wave	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Valletta Film Festival	18	2.72	1.179	18	3.17	1.043	18	3.33	1.029
Malta International Arts Festival	8	2.38	.518	8	3.13	.354	8	3.50	.535
Ghanafest	5	2.40	.894	5	3.00	.707	5	3.80	.447
Malta Jazz Festival	13	3.15	.987	13	3.92	.862	13	3.77	.599
Malta Mediterranean Literature	7	3.14	1.069	7	4.00	.577	7	4.00	.816
L-Ghanja tal-Poplu	7	2.29	.488	7	3.86	.690	7	3.14	.900
Other	6	2.00	.632	6	3.00	1.095	6	2.67	.816
Total	64	2.67	.977	64	3.45	.907	64	3.47	.854

2017 Autumn Wave	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Science in the City	16	2.69	.946	16	3.69	.704	16	3.75	.577
Steam @ Spazju Kreattiv	3	2.00	1.000	3	3.00	0.000	3	3.33	.577
Patience	3	2.33	.577	3	3.33	.577	3	3.67	.577
RIMA Digital Storytelling Workshop	2	3.00	0.000	2	4.00	0.000	2	4.00	0.000
Notte Bianca	19	3.16	.834	19	3.95	.621	19	3.79	.419
Design4DCity	1	2.00		1	3.00		1	3.00	
Forza Malta... Short Films	7	3.14	.900	7	3.57	.535	7	3.57	.787
Other	6	2.50	.837	6	3.33	.516	6	3.50	.548
Total	57	2.82	.889	57	3.67	.636	57	3.68	.540

**Table 5:** Perceived value, satisfaction and feeling with different types of encounters in 2017

(*Source: Author*)

2017 Summer Wave	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet browsing	17	2.47	1.179	17	2.47	1.121	17	3.47	1.125
Saw on TV	15	2.73	.961	15	2.73	.834	15	3.47	.743
Heard on radio	6	2.67	.816	6	2.67	.516	6	3.00	.632
Read on newspapers/magazine	10	2.20	.422	10	2.20	.632	10	3.20	.789
Posted on social media myself	3	4.33	1.155	3	4.33	1.155	3	4.33	1.155
Chat with friends/family face-to-face	4	2.75	.957	4	2.75	.816	4	3.75	.500
Overheard a conversation	4	3.00	.816	4	3.00	.500	4	3.50	.577
Participated in the event	2	3.00	0.000	2	3.00	.707	2	4.00	0.000
Used Valletta 2018 app	1	2.00		1	2.00		1	3.00	
Other	2	3.00	0.000	2	3.00	1.414	2	4.00	0.000
Total	64	2.67	.977	64	2.67	.907	64	3.47	.854

2017 Autumn Wave	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet browsing	18	2.67	1.029	18	3.67	.485	18	3.72	.461
Saw on TV	5	2.80	.447	5	3.60	.548	5	3.80	.447
Heard on radio	8	2.75	.463	8	3.50	.535	8	3.63	.518
Read on newspapers/magazine	7	2.86	1.345	7	3.71	.756	7	3.71	.756
Posted on social media myself	2	3.00	0.000	2	4.00	0.000	2	3.00	1.414
Chat with friends/family face-to-face	4	3.00	.816	4	3.75	.500	4	3.75	.500
Overheard a conversation	2	3.00	0.000	2	3.00	0.000	2	3.50	.707
Participated in the event	9	3.00	1.118	9	3.78	.972	9	3.78	.441
Other	2	3.00	0.000	2	4.00	1.414	2	3.50	.707
Total	57	2.82	.889	57	3.67	.636	57	3.68	.540



**Table 6:** Perceived value, satisfaction and feeling across types of encounters in 2017 (*Source: Author*)

2017 Summer Wave	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Indirect	59	2.66	1.010	59	3.41	.893	59	3.44	.876
Direct	2	3.00	0.000	2	4.50	.707	2	4.00	.000
Other	1	2.00		1	3.00		1	3.00	
Total	62	2.66	.991	62	3.44	.898	62	3.45	.862

2017 Autumn Wave	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Indirect	46	2.78	.867	46	3.63	.532	46	3.67	.560
Direct	9	3.00	1.118	9	3.78	.972	9	3.78	.441
Other	2	3.00	0.000	2	4.00	1.414	2	3.50	.707
Total	57	2.82	.889	57	3.67	.636	57	3.68	.540

Throughout the three waves of field research, direct participation in events (that are less common) (Table 6 and Table 7) offers more value and satisfaction over indirect or other types of experiences (at a 95% confidence interval).

An analysis of these experiences and perceptions at the level of personality type (Table 8) reveals that there is no significant difference across the three types of personalities except for the satisfaction perceived across distinct types of experiences. Resilient personality participants see direct experiences as most satisfying to an extent that is higher than other personality types. By contrast, undercontrolled personalities see direct experiences as more satisfying than other experience types, but to an extent that is far lower than perceived across other personality types.

**Table 7:** Perceived value, satisfaction and feeling across types of encounters for all waves in 2016 and 2017 (*Source: Author*)

	How important is this event for you?			How satisfied are you with your experience?			How did you feel about this encounter?		
	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Type of experience Indirect	387	2.773	.987	387	3.602	.770	105	3.543	.760
Direct	47	3.319	1.163	47	4.085	.996	11	3.818	.405
Other	52	2.923	1.082	52	3.712	.936	3	3.333	.577

**Table 8:** Perceived importance and satisfaction of direct and indirect experiences across the different personality types of participants in 2017 (*Source: Author*)

				How important is this event for you?		How satisfied are you with your experience?		How did you feel about this encounter?	
				Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cluster membership	Overcontrolled	Type of experience	Indirect	2,643	.745	3,643	.497	3,667	.516
			Direct	2,600	.894	4,000	.707	3,600	.548
			Other	3,000	.000	3,500	.707	3,000	.
	Undercontrolled	Type of experience	Indirect	2,754	1,057	3,508	.819	3,450	.723
			Direct	3,000	.976	3,727	1,077	4,000	.000
			Other	2,600	1,075	3,400	1,075	3,500	.707
	Resilient	Type of experience	Indirect	2,790	.963	3,650	.753	3,667	.838
			Direct	3,850	1,226	4,500	.827	4,000	.
			Other	3,000	1,109	3,800	.911	.	.

At a more detailed level of analysis (Table 9) the more satisfying type of experiences involved participants participating in events or chatting with family and friends about a particular Valletta 2018 event – especially among resilient personality participants. Resilient and overcontrolled personality participants also saw direct participation as more satisfying than in the case of undercontrolled personality participants. Data relating to specific events in 2017 is insufficient to offer this level of detail of analysis.

**Table 9:** Perceived importance, satisfaction and effect of different types of experiences across the different personality types of participants for 2016 and 2017 field waves (Source: Author)

				How important is this event for you?		How satisfied are you with your experience?		How did you feel about this encounter?	
				Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Cluster membership	Overcontrolled	How did you experience the event?	Internet browsing	2,500	1,000	3,500	,577	3,500	,707
			Saw on TV	2,000	.	4,000	.	.	.
			Heard on radio	3,000	,000	3,500	,707	3,000	.
			Read on newspapers/magazine	3,000	,816	4,000	,000	4,000	,000
			Posted on social media myself	2,000	.	3,000	.	.	.
			Chat with friends/family face-to-face	2,000	.	4,000	.	4,000	.
			Overheard a conversation	3,000	.	3,000	.	.	.
			Participated in the event	2,600	,894	4,000	,707	3,600	,548
			Other	3,000	,000	3,500	,707	3,000	.
			Used Valletta 2018 App	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Undercontrolled	How did you experience the event?	Internet browsing	2,610	1,115	3,439	,776	3,333	,816
			Saw on TV	2,870	1,014	3,565	,788	3,545	,522
			Heard on radio	2,875	,806	3,813	,750	3,444	,726
			Read on newspapers/magazine	2,563	1,153	3,562	,892	3,357	,842
			Posted on social media myself	3,000	,853	3,250	1,215	4,000	1,414
			Chat with friends/family face-to-face	2,750	1,390	3,438	,727	3,667	,577
			Overheard a conversation	3,000	,632	3,500	,548	3,500	,548
			Participated in the event	3,000	,976	3,727	1,077	4,000	,000
			Other	2,667	1,118	3,444	1,130	4,000	.
			Used Valletta 2018 App	2,000	.	3,000	.	3,000	.
	Resilient	How did you experience the event?	Internet browsing	2,717	1,011	3,646	,690	3,833	,857
			Saw on TV	2,795	1,005	3,590	,850	3,556	,882
			Heard on radio	2,826	,650	3,522	,511	3,250	,500
			Read on newspapers/magazine	2,455	,522	3,364	,809	3,000	.
			Posted on social media myself	2,885	1,033	3,500	,906	3,667	1,528
			Chat with friends/family face-to-face	3,176	,904	4,118	,729	3,750	,500
			Overheard a conversation	2,273	1,009	3,364	,505	.	.
			Participated in the event	3,850	1,226	4,500	,827	4,000	.
			Other	3,000	1,082	3,810	,917	4,000	,000
			Used Valletta 2018 App	.	.	.	.	.	.

Of the total 488 experiences captured during the three field waves, 181 responses offered relevant reflections about the specific encounters. Of these, 52 lamented on their experiences that largely related to access (such as lack of parking, difficult transport conditions, difficult access to the aged) down to the lack of relevance. By contrast, 172 reflections offered praise about their Valletta 2018 encounters, that ranged from comments about access to Valletta during events to downright content and fun experienced during the event. More importantly, analysis of these comments, as well as the insights earned from the qualitative interviews/focus group discussions, is revealing areas that constitute dimensions of value, such as:

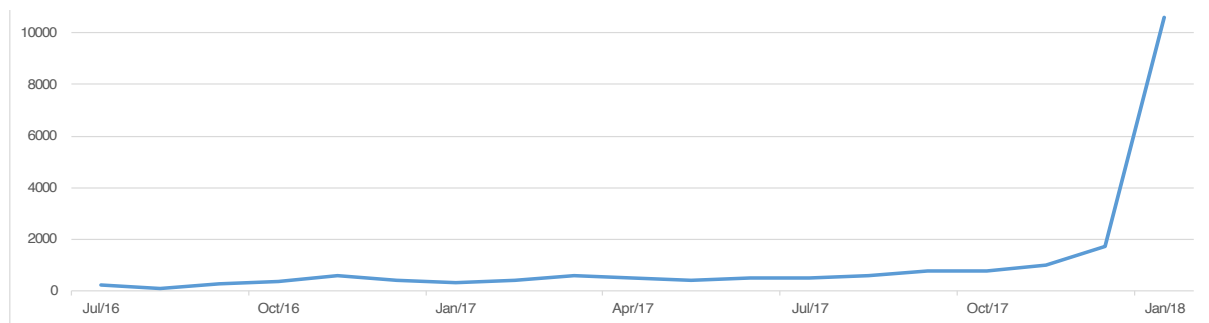
- a) Social: or experiences that help participants engage with other individuals in a temporary or longer-term rapport.  
 "appreciate meeting of people from different cultures, backgrounds and social classes."  
 (R017, F, Undercontrolled)  
 "Enjoyed with the family" (OR72, F, Resilient)  
 "I told my colleagues that there is Ghanafest this weekend, and I encouraged them to attend as it is a very enjoyable event in a very picturesque setting." (R251, F, Undercontrolled)  
 "...you go out as a family." (FGP41, F)
- b) Educational: or experiences that participants see as opportunities for learning or enriching.  
 "Came up on social media feed... Was explicit... Gave all information and more. Was highly satisfactory and informative" (R064, F, Resilient)  
 "It was a wonderful and informative experience, and it opened my eyes to interesting aspects of culture" (R396, M, Resilient)  
 "it helps people to get to know and visit more interesting places" (R432, F, Overcontrolled)  
 "a way of educating people in different sectors" (FGP04, M)  
 "...attract them to participate... educating them." (FGP11, M)
- c) Word-of-mouth and pride: or experiences that propagate positive word-of-mouth.  
 "I heard a lot of positive comments about it" (R004, F, Resilient)  
 "people are anxiously waiting for the event. There are very positive comments from different people." (R172, M, Resilient)  
 "...I think it is going to put a mark, more recognized sort of, the usual, Europeans will know more about our culture..." (FGP11, M)  
 "...it is a wonderful thing that it is known not just in Europe but around the world... we are all proud of it." (FGP21, M)  
 "...it was a privilege, a small City was elected to be the European Capital of Culture." (FGP31, M)  
 "...Valletta no longer a dirty word, there is a new sense of pride there is a sense of nostalgia as well." (INT01, M)
- d) Relevance to one's interests: or experiences that are suited to the target audience (emerging largely from negative comments).  
 "Aim of it as indicated on website is quite relevant but, in my opinion, current activities won't adequately reach the aim." (R029, F, Resilient)  
 "Not really my thing." (R042, F, Resilient)  
 "Looked interesting made me look into it further" (R098, F, Resilient)  
 "not something that interests me." (R142, F, Resilient)  
 "... I think something like Notte Bianca is something which, which everyone is interested in, everyone knows about it..." (FGP01, M)

- e) Access: or experiences that accessible to participants from a logistical, time, language or economic perspective.
- "difficult to park at Fort St Angelo... not very accessible" (R011, F, Undercontrolled)
- "...Only drawback I've seen last year (which didn't affect me personally) was lack of transport available at night after screenings / events ..." (R057, M, Resilient)
- "Was quite ok. If you want to view many films it's too expensive." (R247, M, Undercontrolled)
- "Enjoyed what I saw but it was difficult to find a view." (R252, F, Undercontrolled)
- "...sadly couldn't attend due to the wrong timing of the festival..." (R291, F, Resilient)
- "All event was presented and commented in Maltese. It is your mother language but also English is your official language. You want to make events accessible to the large expat community and attract tourists you have to care about it." (R308, M, Resilient)
- "I am looking forward to attending this one especially now that exams are finally over and we are freer to attend" (R317, F, Resilient)
- "I think this Valletta 2018 sort of helps people ... it is open to everyone, everyone can enjoy cultural events" (FGP02, F)
- "..it would be an idea like... to reach the people by going more into their towns as well." (FGP01, M)
- "...I mean it should be free for all [access to Valletta], or else a small fee... free for all the citizens the locals, I mean so you will have people going to Cultural events or visiting museums." (FGP13, M)
- "...you go to open your door and someone is blocking it, you cannot pass with cars on the pavement." (FGP22, M)
- "...On every pavement there is a crane..." (FGP22, M)

Although audiences and study participants consider online and print media as opportunities for interacting with the brand at yet lesser perceived value, a question remains relating to how such experiences unfold. Indeed, this study considers participants' experiences by looking at statistics compiled separately. This study examines three social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) and notes that during 2017, online mentions of the term "Valletta 2018" increased by 314% over 2016 (up to 7,900). The chart in Figure 2 shows how these mentions surged with the launch of a new campaign around the end of September 2017 and rose exponentially in January 2018 when Valletta became ECOC 2018.

The most popular topics (Figure 3) individuals mentioned in their social media posts related to Valletta as a location (noted through the terms like "#valletta", "valletta", "capital", "#malta", "malta" and "#vallettamalta") as well as (potentially) the touristic orientation of communications ("#visitmalta" and "#travel"). A sense of national pride is also evident through terms like "#lovemalta", while an acknowledgement to the work done by the Valletta 2018 Foundation is evident in terms like "foundation". The artistic nature of the events is perhaps captured by terms like "#maltaphotography" whereas the business orientation or opportunities that the Valletta 2018 programme of events is bringing to the fore is evident in terms like "#travel" or "#retailers".

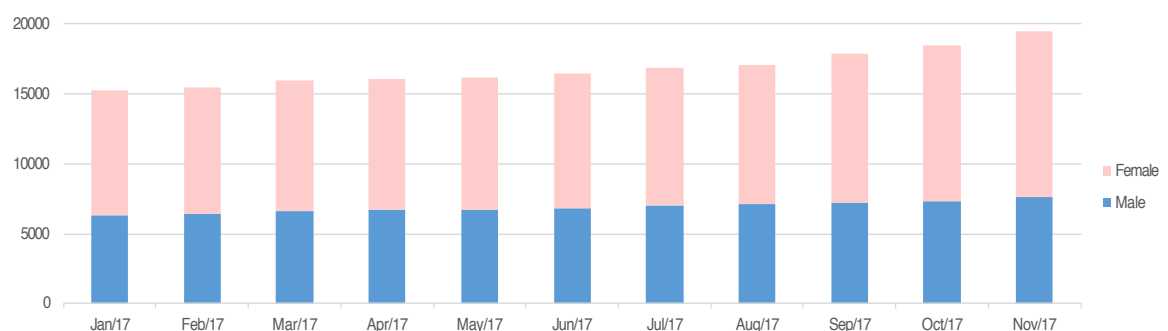
**Figure 2:** "Valletta 2018" mentions (monthly) in social media (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)



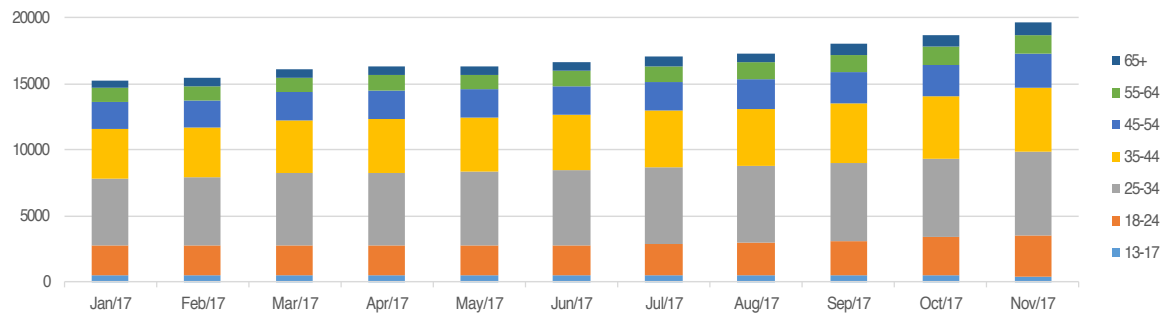
**Figure 3:** "Valletta 2018" themes in posts by individuals in social media (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)



**Figure 4:** "Valletta 2018" Facebook Likes (monthly) by gender (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)

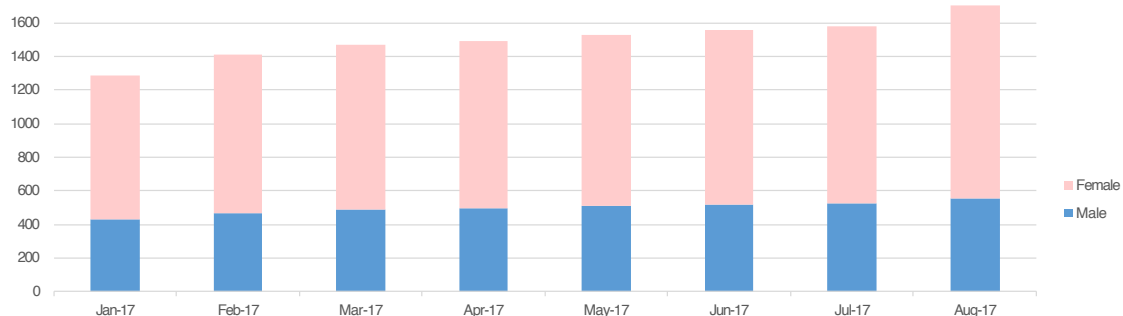


**Figure 5:** “Valletta 2018” Facebook Likes (monthly) by age (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)

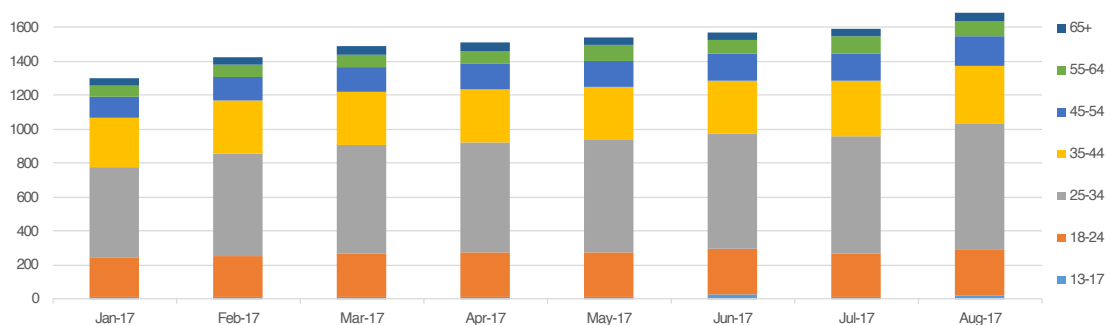


Further analysis of audiences’ engagement with social media on Valletta 2018 suggests that apart from growing engagement, women comprise a major component (around 60%) of social media audiences that interact with Valletta 2018 brand (Figure 4). Individuals aged 25 to 34 years also comprise the larger portion of the audiences that engage with the Valletta 2018 brand on Facebook (accounting for 32% in November 2017) followed by individuals aged 35 to 44 years (accounting for 25% in November 2017) (Figure 5). The same patterns are evident in audiences’ engagement with Tal-Kultura Facebook page (Figure 6 and Figure 7) where 67% of the audience engaged with the page is female and over 40% of the individuals interacting with this page are aged 25 to 34 years.

**Figure 6:** “Tal-Kultura” Facebook Likes (monthly) by gender (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)



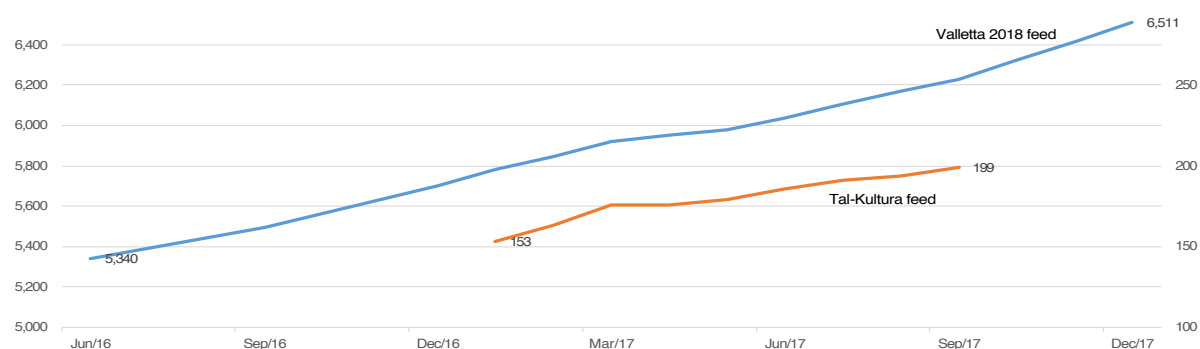
**Figure 7:** “Tal-Kultura” Facebook Likes (monthly) by age (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)



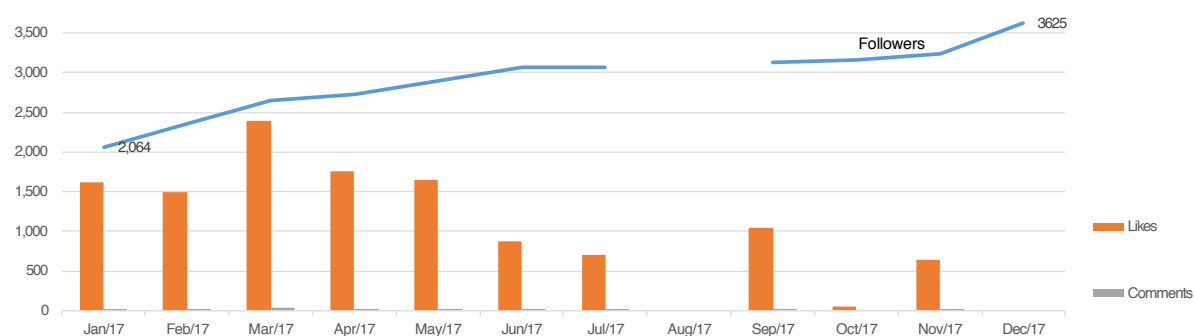


A similar growth trend is also evident when analysing Twitter feeds and followers (Figure 8) where followers increased from 5,340 in June 2016 to over 6,500 by the end of 2017. Instagram followers interacting with the Valletta 2018 feed grew from just over 2,000 in January 2017 to over 3,600 by the end of the same year (Figure 9), whereas followers interacting with the Tal-Kultura feed (Figure 9) rose from 457 in February 2017 to 571 in August 2017.

**Figure 8:** Twitter followers (monthly) for Valletta 2018 and “Tal-Kultura” feeds (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)

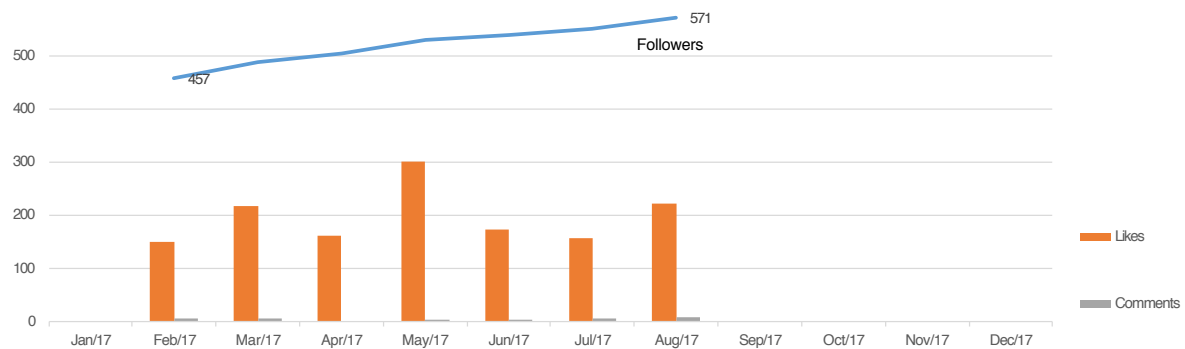


**Figure 9:** Instagram interactions (monthly) for Valletta 2018 feed (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)



In national print media, growth trends are also evident (see Figure 10) with mentions about Valletta 2018 events and related matters growing consistently since 2011. This growth is expected as media releases become more frequent as the Valletta 2018 European Capital of Culture becomes a celebrated reality in January 2018.

**Figure 10:** National print media reports (Source: Valletta 2018 Foundation)



This analysis is considered as ongoing and more insight is being generated as the results from RET (and participants' reflections) are compared with trends observed in participants' social media engagement as well as observations emerging from qualitative research that was completed earlier this year.



## CONCLUSIONS & WAY FORWARD

The study employs an innovative approach that looks at cultural brands and audience engagement from a processual, longitudinal viewpoint. This methodology relies on the employment of a custom-built smartphone app that has so far offered encouraging results, leading to an insight about how participants co-create value in their engagement with cultural brands across the different touchpoints that constitute the totality of a brand experience.

Ongoing results suggest that engagement with the Valletta 2018 involves different types of encounters, with those encounters involving direct engagement / participation in events constitute best opportunities for value co-creation. This co-creation is directed towards five dimensions of value: social, educational, word-of-mouth/pride, relevance (to one's interests) and access. The level of engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand is growing as audiences take to social media to describe encounters and espousal with events and circumstances related to the Valletta 2018 programme. This growing engagement is evident in the constant increase in audiences' mentions of Valletta 2018 brand in social media as well as how print media is relating to Valletta 2018 matters and events.

During 2018, the project is foreseen to unfold dramatically as the qualitative analysis from focus group discussions and face-to-face interviews concludes and new elaborations emerge by corroborating on the ongoing RET/qualitative findings set out in this report. Ensuing efforts will involve the administration of the RET App during the second quarter of 2018 alongside the engagement of a larger number of participants who would, in turn, be encouraged to participate through (a) the use of more attractive incentives as well as (b) face-to-face and online approaches to monitor and encourage engagement. We expect that our field efforts and data collected would help us look more deeply into specifically selected cultural events. A final set of findings emerging from an analysis of quantitative and qualitative data is planned to be published in 2018 and 2019.

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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The study within this theme employs an innovative approach that looks at cultural brands and audience engagement from a processual viewpoint, relying on the development and administration of longitudinal methodology. In turn, this methodology relies on the employment of a custom built smartphone app that is envisaged to capture data from participants who encounter different touchpoints that constitute the totality of a brand experience.

The results of this study can be viewed in tandem with other analytics of engagement with Valletta 2018, such as visits to the website and engagement with social media channels, to gain a comprehensive outlook on the relationship between the Valletta 2018 brand and its target audiences. The study will continue in 2018 to understand audiences' engagement with the Valletta 2018 brand and how these interact with the brand and the effects of branding and marketing campaigns on printed and online media.





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